



With breaking stories and  
newswire products from

**UN NEWS CENTRE**



## **States must address racist attacks during sporting events – UN expert**



UN Photo/Patricia Esteve

3 July 2012 –

States must pay close attention to early signs of racism that could eventually lead to grave human rights violations, a United Nations independent expert said today, stressing that extremist groups in political movements and, in particular, sports arenas must be tackled.

“The presence of extremist groups, including neo-Nazi and skinhead groups, in sporting events is a matter of serious concern,” the Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance, Mutuma Ruteere, [said](#) in a report to the Human Rights Council in Geneva.

“Neo-Nazi symbols, slogans and banners displayed during football matches and racist chants against players or supporters of African origin should not be tolerated,” he noted, pointing to recent incidents of violence and racism during the European Union Football Associations’ championships as evidence that racism in sport is a serious problem.

“I call upon States to intensify the fight against racism in sport and to strengthen the role of sports in promoting cultural diversity,” he said. “In particular, in light of the upcoming Olympics it is crucial that further preventive measures be taken to avoid racist incidents during this event which is going to reach out to all regions of the world.”

The Special Rapporteur warned that impunity for crimes motivated by racism, xenophobia and intolerance encourages recurrence of such acts. He called on States to ensure that thorough and impartial investigations into these crimes are promptly carried out, that those responsible are prosecuted, and that victims have effective access to remedies.

Mr. Ruteere also warned of incendiary rhetoric from political parties, noting that the rise in extremist political parties, movements and groups continues to pose major challenges, particularly in the context of the current economic and financial crisis.

“In this context, vulnerable groups have been made the scapegoats for the rise in unemployment and State debt, and labelled a threat to the standard of living of the general population by extremist political parties,” he said.

In addition, Mr. Ruteere expressed particular concern over traditional political parties that have embraced an openly racist, xenophobic and nationalistic rhetoric.

The Human Rights Council is currently holding its 20th regular session, which ends on 6 July. Independent experts, or special rapporteurs, are appointed by the Council to examine and report back on a country situation or a specific human rights theme. The positions are honorary and the experts are not UN staff, nor are they paid for their work.

News Tracker: past stories on this issue

[On International Day, UN warns about link between racism and conflict](#)